

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 10, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Shelby:

We write to respectfully request that you provide full funding for the Save Our Seas (SOS) 2.0 Act (P.L. 116-224) in the FY22 appropriations bill(s). We are concerned that there are large gaps in funding to implement SOS 2.0 to date.

As you know, SOS 2.0 passed the previous Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law on December 18, 2020. SOS 2.0 aims to reduce, remove, and prevent marine debris in the environment, particularly in U.S. waters and oceans around the world. Among other provisions, SOS 2.0 improves domestic infrastructure to prevent marine debris through several new grant programs and incentivizes international engagement to combat marine debris. The law also strengthens the United States' domestic programs to address marine debris by creating the Marine Debris Foundation, a nonprofit organization that encourages, accepts, and administers private gifts to address marine debris. SOS 2.0 built on the success of the 2018 Save Our Seas Act (P.L. 115-265) in addressing the problem of marine plastic pollution here in the United States and around the world.

Marine plastic pollution is a global problem. According to a 2020 *Science* article, about 8 million metric tons of macroplastic and 1.5 metric tons of microplastic—plastic particles less than 5 millimeters in length—enter the ocean annually.¹ Marine debris pollute our drinking water, harm marine life, create hazards for the maritime industry, and damage our coastal economies. The economic effect of plastic pollution on fishing, tourism, and shipping has been estimated at more than \$13 billion annually.²

Although SOS 2.0 focuses on debris in our oceans, importantly, the law also extends to the Great Lakes, where plastic pollution is similarly prevalent. A 2016 study by the Rochester Institute of Technology found that nearly 10,000 metric tons of plastic debris enter the Great Lakes every year

¹ <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aba9475>

² <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aba9475>

from the United States and Canada.³ Also, in 2016, scientists with the U.S. Geological Survey and State University of New York at Fredonia studied 107 water samples from 29 Great Lakes tributaries in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and New York and found microplastics in all samples. Combined, these 29 tributaries constitute about 22 percent of the total river water that flows into our five Great Lakes.⁴

We are encouraged that one SOS 2.0 program, the Section 302(a) infrastructure program, received funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), which became law on November 15, 2021. We are similarly encouraged that the State-Foreign Operations Appropriations bill under consideration by the Senate includes some funding for marine debris efforts.

Even still, large funding gaps to implement SOS 2.0 remain. The Senate's Interior-Environment Appropriations bill and the FY22 Consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 4502), passed by the House in July 2021, exclude funding for Section 302(b), (c), and (d). Additionally, each chamber's Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations bill excludes funding for the Marine Debris Foundation, authorized in Section 118(a). Section 302(b) and (c) establish critically important programs; Section 302(d) codifies the already-successful Trash Free Waters grant program. If adequately funded, these subsections would provide important incentives for reducing and removing plastic waste—including microplastics and microfibers—from drinking water and wastewater.

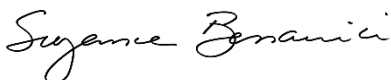
As you know, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of State, and United States Agency for International Development require adequate funding to complete implementation of this important law, and to achieve the critical goals Congress intended with its passage.

As Congress continues its work to pass FY22 appropriations, we respectfully urge Appropriations Committee leadership in both the House and Senate to provide full funding for SOS 2.0. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Chris Jacobs
Member of Congress



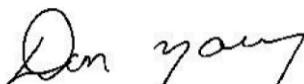
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³ <https://www.rit.edu/news/researchers-study-plastic-pollution-great-lakes>

⁴ <https://www.usgs.gov/news/widespread-plastic-pollution-found-great-lakes-tributaries>



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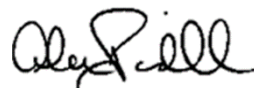
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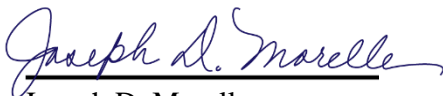
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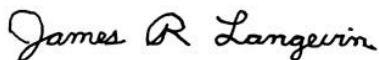
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